

WRITE ON: A 50-YEAR ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE
OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS IN THREE CITIES

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ABSTRACT

This textual analysis traced the evolution of the radical, monitorial, facilitative, and collaborative roles of the alternative press in New York; Columbus, Ohio; and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Political and cultural articles were analyzed in 81 underground newspapers published between 1956 and 1983, three alternative newsweeklies published between 2002 and 2011, and five online alternative publications published between Oct. 1, 2011 and April 1, 2012. Publications were analyzed for content and story selection (elections, government activities, diversity issues, and arts), objectivity, use of sources, tone, efforts at community building, and relationships to mainstream media. The findings suggest that culture, in addition to politics, is a component of community and democracy. Further, the findings suggest that normative theory previously has been too narrowly conceived, as any news organization simultaneously might perform multiple roles.